

2021

AP[®]

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AP[®] English Literature and Composition

Free-Response Questions

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

3 Questions

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In Ai's poem "The Man with the Saxophone," published in 1985, the speaker encounters a man playing a saxophone. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Ai uses literary elements and techniques to convey the complexity of the speaker's encounter with the saxophone player at that particular time and place.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

The Man with the Saxophone

New York. Five A.M.
The sidewalks empty.
Only the steam
Line pouring from the manhole covers seems alive,
5 as I amble from shop window to shop window,
sometimes stopping to stare, sometimes not.
Last week's snow is brittle now
and unrecognizable as the soft, white hair
that bearded the face of the city.
10 I head farther down Fifth Avenue
toward the thirties,
my mind empty
like the Buddhists tell you is possible
if only you don't try.
15 If only I could
turn myself into a bird
like the shaman¹ I was meant to be,
but I can't,
I'm earthbound
20 and solitude is my companion,
the only one you can count on.
Don't, don't try to tell me otherwise.
I've had it all and lost it
and I never want it back,
25 only give me this morning to keep,
the city asleep
and there on the corner of Thirty-fourth and Fifth,
the man with the saxophone,

his fingerless gloves caked with grime,
30 his face also,
the layers of clothes welded to his skin.
I set down my case,
he steps backward
to let me know I'm welcome,
35 and we stand a few minutes
in the silence so complete
I think I must be somewhere else, not here,
not in this city, this heartland of pure noise.
Then he puts the sax to his lips again
40 and I raise mine.
I suck the air up from my diaphragm
and bend over into the cold, golden reed,
waiting for the notes to come,
and when they do,
45 for that one moment,
I'm the unencumbered bird of my imagination,
rising only to fall back
toward concrete,
each note a black flower,
50 opening, mercifully opening
into the unforgiving new day.

¹ A spiritual leader who is believed to be endowed with magical powers

"The Man with the Saxophone." Copyright © 1985 by Ai, from THE COLLECTED POEMS OF AI by Ai. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Begin your response to this question at the top of a new page in the separate Free Response booklet and fill in the appropriate circle at the top of each page to indicate the question number.

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Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

The following excerpt is from Tim Winton’s novel *Breath*, published in 2008. In this passage, the main character, Bruce Pike, recalls an incident at a nearby river. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Winton uses literary elements and techniques to represent the complex response of the narrator to the incident at the riverbank.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

At the first signs of spring giving way to summer townie kids gathered after school near the bridge at the riverbank to dive off the crude springboard. The
 Line river was brown with tannin and cold as hell but it was
 5 very slow-flowing and safe to swim in. It was there that Loonie and I became friends.

Ivan Loon was twelve and a whole year older than me. He was the publican’s¹ son and although we’d been at school together half our lives we never had the
 10 remotest thing in common. That is, before we realized that we’d each independently perfected the art of causing riverside panic.

One November afternoon I coasted down to the river on my bike to have a jump off the plank but
 15 when I got there four girls and somebody’s mother were slithering up and down the bank, yanking at their own ears and screaming that there was a boy in the water, that he was drowning right beneath them. Naturally they didn’t know *which* boy because they
 20 were from out of town, but they knew he was *a* boy for he’d been there a minute ago and simply hadn’t come up from a dive and were there sharks and couldn’t I for God’s sake stop asking questions and just get on with doing something.

Sun blazed down in rods through the big old gums.² There were dragonflies in the air above us. I saw a towel near the diving plank and beside it a grubby pair of thongs,³ so I had no reason to doubt there was a crisis. Only the sluggish water seemed
 25 harmless and these females, who were making a frightful noise, looked so strangely out of place. I should have twigged.⁴ But I went into action on their behalf. As I bolted out to the sagging end of the springboard the wood was hot and familiar underfoot.

35 I looked down at the wind-ruffled surface of the river and tried to think. I decided that it would be best to wade in from the bank, to work my way out by feel, and just keep diving and groping in the hope of touching something human. There wasn’t time to go
 40 looking for help. I was it. I felt myself rise to the moment—put-upon but taller all of a sudden—and before I could embark upon my mission, or even pull my shirt off, Ivan Loon burst from the water. He came up so close to shore with such a feral shriek the
 45 woman fell back on the mud as if shot.

I stood bouncing on the plank while she lay in the muck. Then she reared up on her elbows. Loonie started to laugh, which didn’t really help her mood. I had never in my life seen a woman so angry. She
 50 charged into the water, lunging and swiping to no avail, while Loonie just ducked and fainted and giggled. He was a freckly sort of kid but he went so red with pleasure and exertion all his freckles disappeared. The poor woman never got close to him.
 55 Her frock ballooned about her. She made tanty⁵ noises like a toddler. Loonie sculled himself out of range, bobbed provocatively for a bit, then stroked off to the shadows of the far bank. Left alone with her once again, I realized it was more fun to pull this
 60 prank than it was to stand by while someone else did it. I began to feel more guilt than glee. Two Dr. Scholl’s sandals floated upstream in the breeze and I watched until I could bear it no longer and dived dutifully after them. As I snared them and sidestroked
 65 back to the bank they clunked together like firewood. It was embarrassing to see this grown woman standing there in her clinging dress with her dimpled knees and chubby legs all muddy.

70 There's tree roots down there, I told her. You just
dive down and hold on. It's easy.

75 She never said a thing, just snatched her shoes and
scrambled back to the girls higher up the bank, and
while I lay in the water trying to decide how to feel
about her she smoothed herself back into some kind
of authority and led the others up through the trees
and out of sight. I felt sympathy and contempt all at
once. Car doors slammed and there was the stammer
of a starter motor.

¹ Owner or manager of a pub

² Smooth-barked trees

³ A type of sandal

⁴ Understood or realized

⁵ Angry or tantrum-like

Excerpt from *BREATH* by Tim Winton. Copyright © 2008 by Tim Winton. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

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Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In many works of fiction, houses take on symbolic importance. Such houses may be literal houses or unconventional ones (e.g., hotels, hospitals, monasteries, or boats).

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a literal or unconventional house serves as a significant symbol. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how this house contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

All Over Creation
All the Light We Cannot See
The Awakening
Beloved
Brown Girl, Brownstones
Death of a Salesman
Elmet
Fences
The God of Small Things
Great Expectations
The Haunting of Hill House
Homegoing
A House for Mr. Biswas
The House of Mirth
The House of the Seven Gables
The House on Mango Street
Housekeeping
Howards End
Jane Eyre
Kindred
Mrs. Dalloway
Native Son
Nervous Conditions
Never Let Me Go

Northanger Abbey
Passing
The Portrait of a Lady
The Professor's House
A Raisin in the Sun
The Remains of the Day
The Round House
Saturday
The Secret Garden
Sense and Sensibility
Sing, Unburied, Sing
A Streetcar Named Desire
Sula
To Kill a Mockingbird
The Turn of the Screw
Uncle Tom's Cabin
Where the Crawdads Sing
White Teeth
Wide Sargasso Sea
Wuthering Heights

Begin your response to this question at the top of a new page in the separate Free Response booklet and fill in the appropriate circle at the top of each page to indicate the question number.

STOP

END OF EXAM